



CONNECTICUT ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

AFFILIATED WITH THE
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS



Written Testimony of
AnnMarie Meacham Duffy, M.S.
Certified School Psychologist
Secretary, Connecticut Association of School Psychologists
**SB 1138 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STRENGTHENING OF SCHOOL
BULLYING LAWS**
March 11, 2011
Education Committee

Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and the distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is AnnMarie Meacham Duffy and I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists (CASP).

I'm here today to testify to CASP's support of Senate Bill 1138, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws.

CASP is in support of this legislation and the positive effect that SB 1138 can have on school-aged children in Connecticut. Section 1 subsection a (2-5) which expands bullying to include cyber bullying as well as include any future developments in electronic communication. Bullying has seen a marked increased increase over the past few years with the use of social networking sites, texting, sexting and other forms of verbal and technological means of communication

CASP is in favor of Section 1, subsection a. (2-5) as it expands bullying to include cyberbullying and to include any future developments in electronic communications.

CASP is in support of Subsection b. (15-16 A,B,C) addressing incidences of bullying that happen off school grounds and/or outside school hours. Bullying that happens outside school find its way into the school building and can have a negative effect on a student's academic performance or feelings of safety while in school.

CASP is in support of Section 6 requiring annual training of school personnel on the prevention, identification and school response to bullying. We support the emphasis on developmentally appropriateness of strategies both to prevent bullying and to implement immediate and effective interventions aimed at stopping bullying. We agree training should include information about interactions and relationships between students committing acts of bullying, recipients/ victims of bullying and by-standers who witnesses bullying. Such annual training also needs to emphasize vigilance spotting bullying,

CASP is in full support of Section 9 subsection (b) regarding the appointment of a school psychologist or counselor to serve in the proposed role of Safe School Environment Specialist. Through the scope and breadth of their training, School Psychologists are uniquely qualified in the assessment and evaluation of children's social-emotional needs and the effect of bullying on them. It is important for school psychologists to be an integral part of every school's response and issues that arise from bullying, including cyberbullying.

CASP is in full support of Section 9 (2) (f) regarding the education of students, school employees, parents and guardians of students on issues relating to bullying including cyber-bullying by members of the Safe School Environment Team. We feel this education needs to be done yearly. Information relating to bullying could be disseminated through the use of social networking sites as Facebook, Twitter and e-mail as well as more traditional means -trainings, parent group meetings, newsletters and student/ local newspapers.

Today's teens have the skills and knowledge to use electronic communication devises to send messages or photos without the need to see the keys. They can even use a cell phone that is in their pocket or under a desk in such cell phone free zones as the classroom. They have the ability to gain unauthorized access and use personal accounts under false pretenses. Facebook, email, twitter would be a few examples of these accounts. Issues that occur outside school have led to more students feeling harassed, bullied or ostracized for accusations- real or malicious of being a bully.



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Good afternoon Senator Stillman, Representative Fleischmann, and the distinguished members of the Education Committee. My name is AnnMarie Meacham Duffy and I am submitting the following testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Association of School Psychologists (CASP).

I'm here today to testify to CASP's support of Senate Bill 1138, An Act Concerning the Strengthening of School Bullying Laws.

My testimony is specifically in regards to Section 1 subsection a. (2-5) expanding 'bullying' to include cyber bullying and including any developments in electronic communications; Subsection b. (15-16 A,B,C) addressing incidences happening off school grounds/ after school hours; Sec. 6 (NEW) that requires annual training to school employees on prevention, identification and response to school bullying. Training covers (1) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying among students in school and outside of the school setting, (2) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate and effective interventions to stop bullying, (3) information regarding interaction and relationship between students committing acts of bullying, students against whom such acts of bullying are directed and witnesses of such acts of bullying; and Section 9 (b), (c) and 2 (f).

CASP advocates for the needs of children and the best interest of students. The School Psychologists' training in child development and teacher consultation lends itself to developing a developmentally appropriate response. School Psychologists often mediate between students in prevention and/or minimizing the impact of conflicts. School psychologists now function in leading groups

and/or working individual with children on issues that impact their daily functioning.

CASP recognizes bullying is often a covert act (including looks, flipping of hair, sexting, etc.) that can lead to damaging results without swift action on the part of school systems. Today's students are well versed in social networking. Texting is so automatic students are able to text in their pockets, under desks, etc. making it almost impossible for adults to note its occurrence. It is the role of the school psychologist working in school districts, particularly at the upper grades to help students work through the emotional disruption to the learning environment.

We need clear and distinct guidelines for school administrators on what constitutes bullying and training for school personnel. Such training needs to be provided to school staff annually, in the same way we have annual Title IX training. This should be done by individuals, such as school psychologists, school social workers, school counselors, who have training in working with individuals with emotional needs, in conjunction with school administrators.

CASP is in favor of Section 1 subsection a. (2-5) as it expands 'bullying' to include cyber bullying and include future developments in electronic communications.

CASP supports Subsection b. (15-16 A, B,C) addressing incidences that happen off school grounds/ after school hours. This clarifies the school's purview in regards to electronic bullying and specifically permits schools to address cyber bullying.

CASP supports Section 6 that requires annual training for school employees on prevention, identification and response to school bullying. Training covers (1) developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying among students in school and outside of the school setting, (2) developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate and effective interventions to stop bullying, (3) information regarding the interaction and relationship between students committing acts of bullying, students against whom such acts of bullying are directed and witnesses of such acts of bullying]. Such annual training also needs to emphasize vigilance spotting bullying.

Section 9 (b), (c): School psychologists are uniquely trained to play the role of the proposed Safe School Environment Specialist based on training and experience of being called upon to address bullying. Current practice of school psychology includes many functions of the proposed Safe School Environment Specialist including chairing school team meetings, identifying and understanding the function of student behavior, and collecting and maintaining confidential records relating to student behavior.

CASP endorses the training of school personnel and parents/ guardians of student on issues relating to bullying detailed in Section 9 (2) (F).

Communicating incidences and school response to bullying could be disseminated through both social networking and public service announcements on school access channels as well as more traditional methods such as addressing parent groups, newsletters and student/ local newspapers.

Today's teens have the skills and knowledge to use electronic communication devises to send messages or photos without the need to see the keys. They can even use a cell phone that is in their pocket or under a desk in such cell phone free zones as the classroom. They have the ability to gain unauthorized access and use personal accounts under false pretenses. Facebook, email, twitter would be a few examples of these accounts. Issues that occur outside school have led to more students feeling harassed, bullied or ostracized for accusations- real or malicious of being a bully.